News From the Wyoming Department of Health

Tuesday, March 14, 2006

Influenza Past Peak in Wyoming

CHEYENNE – Seasonal flu activity across Wyoming appears to have reached and passed its peak according to Wyoming Department of Health officials.

"The number of influenza cases has been steadily decreasing in recent weeks," said Nicole Lindsey, Wyoming Department of Health surveillance epidemiologist. "So far eighty new cases of confirmed influenza have been reported for last week, as compared to 279 and 330 cases in the preceding two weeks."

Lindsey said 1,717 confirmed cases of influenza have been reported statewide so far this season, compared to 1,163 cases by the same time last year. The actual number of influenza cases is likely to be much higher. Most people who are ill do not seek medical care or are not tested for the disease, and not all providers report their results.

The Department of Health is investigating a recent report of a pediatric influenza-associated death in Sheridan County. Earlier in the season, an elderly patient died in Laramie County.

"While we may be past the peak of flu activity for this season, there are still some common-sense steps you can take to help protect yourself against the flu," said Wyoming Department of Health Director, Dr. Brent Sherard. Sherard noted the very young and the elderly face the most risk from influenza, and suggested the following the measures:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Keep your distance from others if you become sick
- When possible, stay home from work, school and errands when you are sick, and don't send your children to child care or school if they are sick
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze or cough and be sure to throw the tissue away immediately after use
- Wash your hands often or use an alcohol based cleaner
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth because these are the easiest locations on the body to spread germs

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